

Supply—Veterans Affairs

Mr. Gregg: If the deafness is due to service, treatment is provided by the department and the hearing apparatus is furnished free.

Mr. Cruickshank: What about the monthly upkeep of the batteries?

Mr. Gregg: Under the conditions I have related, all upkeep is taken care of.

Mr. Lennard: What is the explanation for the increase of \$29,682?

Mr. Gregg: As my hon. friend knows, the veterans bureau provides free advocate service for veterans seeking pensions. When a veteran feels he has a good case but is unable to prove it, he is able to obtain the services of a competent advocate to help him in assembling his evidence and presenting it when the review board next visits his area. The work of this bureau is certainly not lessening. Here again, as in the case of the pension board, we are encouraging the pension advocates to do their utmost on behalf of applicants, even if it requires extra expenditures on travelling.

We believe that in the long run such a policy will be economical because when a veteran who feels he has a pensionable disability believes that everything is being done that can be done, his mind is in a better state and in the long run the cost to the taxpayer is less.

Mr. Lennard: How many more cases have been appealed during the past year than previously, and why has this increase taken place?

Mr. Gregg: I cannot give that offhand but I shall be glad to get the information and give it to my hon. friend, if not on this item, later on.

Mr. Lennard: I notice that there are increases in the numbers of pension advocates. There is an increase of one in the case of pension advocate, grade 4; an increase of three in pension advocates, grade 3; an increase of two in pension advocates, grade 2. Where are those pension advocates located and what is the reason for these increases?

Mr. Gregg: I do not think there has been an increase. There has been an increase in those who are listed as permanent as compared with those who were blanketed in with the temporaries. Pension advocates are located in the 18 districts across Canada. In New Brunswick, for instance, there is one, and I think there are three in Toronto.

Mr. Lennard: I notice that there are some part-time pension advocates provided for. Should there not be more of these? Are

[Mr. Cruickshank.]

there a sufficient number of pension advocates throughout the country to adequately look after the cases that are coming in?

Mr. Gregg: The part-time advocates would be located in the smaller districts where the work would not warrant the use of a full-time advocate.

Mr. Lennard: Are there any districts where there is not a sufficient number of pension advocates?

Mr. Gregg: No, Mr. Chairman, I have had no complaints as to the adequacy of the number of advocates. I feel they are fulfilling the purpose for which they are intended, and are taking care of the cases. In visiting the various offices across Canada I made it a point to find out from the pension advocates how many cases they had ready for the next sitting of the review board. So far as I could learn, the meshing of the work of the advocate and the work of the review board was going forward satisfactorily.

Mr. Cruickshank: I do not wish to make a complaint but merely to ask a question. First of all I should like to say that I think we have a most excellent board of pension commissioners. In administering the act they are fair in every way. It may be unusual for me but I should like to pay a compliment to the parliamentary assistant who has assisted me with every complaint I have put before him. The complaint from my riding, and indeed from my province, is as to the delay in getting appeals ready for the pension commission. I am not sure of the number but I do not think you have enough commissioners.

An hon. Member: Louder.

Mr. Cruickshank: I have never been accused of that before. I do not think there are enough commissioners going to the various provinces. I am not complaining about their decisions but I am complaining about the fact that there is too long a delay before appeals are heard. I do not think you have a sufficient number of commissioners to hear appeals. After all, we must remember that we now have the veterans of two wars to consider, and what may have been sufficient to cover the first great war—and I do not think it was—is not enough now. I think in the province of British Columbia there is too long a delay before the consideration of appeals. I should like to know if we are going to increase the number of commissioners to hear these cases.

Mr. Gregg: I am glad to have that brought to my attention. If there are any special cases of delay I should like to know about them. During the past year I have not felt that the delays were caused by the fact that the review board, composed of commissioners,